

Uṣūl al-Kāfi

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Researched, commented upon, and translated by
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Book One

The Book of Intellect and Foolishness

1.1.1 *Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb informed us that a number of our scholars, among whom was Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-'Attār, reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad reported that al-Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb reported that al-'Alā' ibn Razīn reported that Muḥammad ibn Muslim reported that Abū Ja'far [al-Bāqir] said:*

“When God created intellect, he spoke to it saying, ‘Come forward,’ whereupon it came forward. Then he said to it, ‘Go back,’ whereupon it went back.¹ Then he said, ‘By my might and my majesty, I have not created a creature more beloved to me than you, and I have not perfected you except in my beloved.² Let it be known! You alone do I command, and you alone do I forbid.³ [According to] you alone do I punish, and [according] to you alone do I confer reward.”⁴

¹ This tradition allegorically describes an obedient servant who unflinchingly carries out his master’s every command without question. Such is the state of intellect (*al-'aql*) with respect to God, its master. When one is ordered to come forward, to fulfill an obligation, his intellect readily accepts. When ordered to go back, to refrain from the prohibited, his intellect readily accepts. Although some scholars have entertained the possibility that this incident actually took place on some other plane of existence, for two reasons, construing it as an allegory is better. First, intellect is merely a *trait* of conscious beings and cannot exist independently of them. Second, this tradition—as opposed to 1.1.2—speaks of no audience for whom God might have displayed his favorite creature’s outstanding obedience. Rather, Imām al-Bāqir is teaching us, through an allegory, something of the nature of intellect.

² The beloved that God mentions here are his prophets, messengers, and imams, and the love that he alludes to is special love reserved only for them. The evidence for this claim lies in the word “perfected,” for tradition 1.1.11 corroborates what logic dictates: a divine guide must have a greater intellect than the people to whom he is sent. Therefore, only a divine guide can have perfect intellectual powers. Thus, the beloved mentioned in this tradition are the divine guides, not ordinary righteous people. The message of this sentence is twofold: intellect is so dear to me that I shall only grant perfect intellect to my chosen servants; my chosen servants are so dear to me that I shall endow them with my dearest creation. Of course, it is true that all people can strengthen and increase their intellectual powers by effectively using what they have been given and by praying to God—as evidenced by section 25 of 1.1.12—however, the present tradition makes no mention of this truth.

³ When God commands or forbids, it is the intellectual faculty within man to whom he speaks. It is intellect that has the ability to comprehend the command. It is intellect that has the power to make the choice to obey or refuse.

⁴ The last two sentences of this tradition describe an oft-repeated theme in this section of *al-Kāfī*: the degree of intellect one is given determines the standard by which God will judge him

1.1.2 *‘Alī ibn Muḥammad reported that Sahl ibn Ziyād reported that ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān reported that Muḥaddal ibn Ṣāliḥ reported that Sa‘d ibn Ṭarīf reported that Al-Aṣḡagh ibn Nubāṭah reported that ‘Alī said:*

“Gabriel descended upon Adam⁵ and said, ‘O Adam, I have been commanded to offer you the choice of one of three [traits], so choose one and leave two.’⁶ Adam asked him, ‘O Gabriel, and what are these three [traits]?’ He answered, ‘[They are] intellect, decency, and devotion.’⁷ Adam said, ‘I most certainly choose intellect.’ Gabriel

(see 1.1.7-9). It should be noted that we have inferred the phrase “according to” when it does not exist in the Arabic for two reasons. First, it contradicts what we know about reward and punishment to say that intellect alone is rewarded or punished. It is the human body and soul as a whole that receives reward and punishment, not just the intellect, which is merely a *trait* of the human being, not the human being himself. Second, other narrations of this same tradition include the Arabic equivalent of “according to” (see *al-Kāfi* 1.1.32 and *Man lā yaḥḍurubu al-faqīh* 4.176.1).

Tradition 1.1.1 teaches the following: 1) Intellect is unfailingly obedient to God. 2) Intellect is God’s most beloved creature. 3) Perfect intellect is only found in God’s beloved. 4) The dearer one is to God, the stronger his intellect. 5) God’s command only applies to a person to the extent of his intellect; likewise, he only rewards and punishes a person to the extent of his intellect.

⁵ This tradition’s detailed account of the interaction and conversation between Gabriel and Adam prevents us from consigning it to allegory. In this regard, it is the same as the story of Adam in the Qur’ān. However, the three personified human attributes mentioned here present us with the same difficulty we faced in 1.1.1: how can human attributes that cannot exist independently of their possessor stand before Adam and speak? In traditions about purgatory and the hereafter, it is not uncommon for good and bad traits to appear in the form of beautiful and ugly figures. In fact, even in this temporal life, realities appear to some people in the form of visions. In the story of Joseph, for example, God depicts the ultimate reunion of Joseph and his family and his noble standing among them as eleven stars, the sun, and the moon prostrating before Joseph in a dream (Qur’ān 12:4). The king and Joseph’s two cellmates also see similar visions that represent future events (Qur’ān 12:36 and 12:43). Thus, in the tradition at hand, there is nothing far-fetched about Gabriel’s teaching Adam the nature of three human traits in tangible form. If it seems unusual, it is because we are used to dealing with mental concepts and words, not symbolic representations. However, because it is extremely important that a prophet of God know reality intimately, God chose to leave weaker conventional methods of teaching with words and concepts and personified the three traits as figures to give Adam an unforgettable lesson about intellect’s role in guiding decency and devotion.

⁶ Obviously, Adam possessed these three traits—especially intellect—before Gabriel’s offer. Accordingly, perhaps Gabriel was asking him which of the three he would like to keep or which of the three he would like perfected in him.

⁷ Understanding this tradition requires an understanding of these three human traits and their interactions with one another. Intellect is the human capacity to understand reality. Decency

told decency and devotion, ‘Go away and leave intellect [with Adam].’ Thereupon they said, ‘O Gabriel, we have been ordered to remain with intellect wherever he may be.’⁸ Gabriel said, ‘As you wish.’ Then he ascended.”⁹

1.1.3 *Aḥmad ibn Idrīs reported that Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār reported that one of our scholars recounted from [the time of] Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Ṣādiq without mentioning his source] that a man said, “I asked Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Ṣādiq], “What is intellect?” He replied:*

‘It is that by which the All-Merciful is worshipped and the gardens are earned.’¹⁰

“I asked him, “Then [what was] the trait in Mu‘āwiyah?” He answered:

(*al-ḥayā*) is a trait that makes a person recoil from anything he deems bad—whether it be bad in reality or not. Devotion (*al-dīn* in the sense of *al-tadayyun*) is a trait that compels a person to do anything he deems good—whether it be good in reality or not. A person’s intellect, inasmuch as it understands reality, realizes that decency and devotion are good in and of themselves and that he should acquire them. Once he acquires them, his intellect guides his decency so that it makes him recoil only from what is *truly* bad. Similarly, his intellect guides his devotion so that it compels him to do only what is *truly* good. It follows that if Adam had chosen decency or devotion instead of intellect, he would have been like a fledgling child whose misguided decency causes him to shy away from asking a question or conversing with an adult; or like the pagans of Mecca or the Khawārij, who devoted themselves to a religion founded on fantasies and misconceptions. However, by choosing intellect, he acquired a torch by which to guide his other two faculties.

⁸ God’s commands are of two types. One, called a legal command (*amr tashrī‘ī*), is similar to human commands in that when they are issued, the recipient can choose to obey or refuse. The second, called an existential command (*amr takwīnī*), simply reflects God’s will for something to be. No word is spoken; no refusal is possible. It is as God says, “If we want something to exist, all we say to it is ‘be’ and it is” (Qur’ān 16:40). Considering that the personified traits, decency and devotion, are not sentient beings capable of obeying or refusing a divine command, the command referred to here is necessarily of the latter kind: a reflection of God’s will that they remain forever inextricably coupled with intellect.

⁹ Tradition 1.1.2 teaches the following: 1) Intellect is inextricably coupled with decency and devotion. 2) A lack of decency or devotion indicates a lack of intellect. 3) Intellect guides decency and devotion. 4) The prophets can be shown reality in a tangible form.

¹⁰ Though the transmitter of this tradition asked for the definition of intellect, Imām al-Ṣādiq replies by explaining how intellect ought to be used. He thus employs a rhetorical device commonly used in education where a teacher diverts his student’s misguided question by answering a more important and fruitful one. The Qur’ān employs this device on several occasions. For instance, when the Muslims ask, “what shall we give in charity?” it diverts their question away from “what?” to the more important question “to whom?” (Qur’ān 2:215).

On another note, this tradition conveys the same message as 1.1.6. If they are read together, each one helps us understand the other.

‘That was cleverness. That was devilry.’¹¹ It is similar to intellect, but it is not intellect.’¹²

1.1.4 *Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā reported that Ibn Faḍḍāl reported that Al-Ḥasan ibn al-Jahm said, “I heard al-Riḍā say:*

‘Every man’s [sole] friend is his intellect,¹³ and his [sole] enemy is his folly.’¹⁴

1.1.5 *[Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā] reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad reported that Ibn Faḍḍāl reported that Al-Ḥasan ibn al-Jahm said, “I told Abū al-Ḥasan [al-Riḍā], ‘Among us are some who love [the Prophet’s family] dearly and believe as we believe [in your teachings]; however,*

¹¹ We generally consider a person who is keen and clever to have strong powers of intellect without concerning ourselves with how he uses these powers. Apparently, the transmitter of this tradition had the same misconception, for when he heard Imām al-Ṣādiq describe intellect as a faculty by which one worships God, he became confused as to how someone with as much “intellect” as Mu‘āwiyah could be so evil. The Imām addresses this misconception by saying that intellect is not the faculty of keenness itself. Rather, if the faculty is used for evil, it is called devilry, and if it is used for good, it is called intellect.

¹² Tradition 1.1.3 teaches the following: 1) Intellect naturally leads one to worship God and is a means to reaching paradise. 2) One who does not use his intellect for these purposes has not used it properly and is practically devoid of intellect. 3) The likes of Mu‘āwiyah, who use the divine gift of intellect for evil, are devils.

¹³ It might seem strange that Imām al-Riḍā would say that man’s sole friend is his intellect and his sole enemy is his folly, thereby limiting friendship to intellect and enmity to folly, as though man has no other friend or enemy. However, if we examine the role of friends and enemies, we shall see that his message warrants hyperbole. A friend is one who acts in our best interest and defends us against harm. This is precisely the role intellect plays in our lives. In fact, it is more fitting that we call intellect a friend than any other because, by allowing us to comprehend the existence of God, helping us to worship him, and leading us to everlasting happiness in paradise, it benefits us more than any other friend can. Likewise, an enemy is one who harms us. This is precisely the effect that foolishness has on our lives. In fact, since the harm inflicted by our own foolishness is far greater than the harm inflicted by anything else, it is more fitting that it be called an enemy. It is to convey this message that Imām al-Riḍā phrases his sentence as he does, not to negate the existence of other friends and enemies.

¹⁴ Our intellect is only our friend to the extent that we use it. If we leave intellect idle or use it for evil we are said to be foolish. Thus, foolishness is not a faculty that exists in parallel with intellect; rather, foolishness is the state of not using one’s intellect.

Tradition 1.1.4 teaches the following: 1) We should befriend a person who employs his intellect because if his intellect is his friend, then it is the friend of his friend as indicated by the saying of Imām ‘Alī, “Your friends are three...your own friend, your friend’s friend, and your enemy’s enemy” (*Nahj al-Balāghah* saying 295). Likewise, we should be the enemy of a fool, for if his foolishness is his enemy, then it is the enemy of his friend as indicated by the remainder of the aforementioned tradition of Imām ‘Alī. 2) We should obey our intellect since it serves our best interest.

they do not have that [great] resolve [to act according to your teachings. What is to become of them? Will they be punished for not acting according to their beliefs]¹⁵ He replied:

‘They are not among those whom God has reproved.¹⁶ God has only said, “Take heed, O possessors of intellect.”’¹⁷

1.1.6 *Aḥmad ibn Idrīs reported that Muḥammad ibn Ḥassān reported that Abū Muḥammad al-Rāzī reported that Sayf ibn ‘Amīrah reported that Ishāq ibn ‘Ammār reported that Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Ṣādiq] said:*

“He who employs his intellect devotes himself to [the true] religion,¹⁸ and he who devotes himself to [the true] religion shall enter the garden.”¹⁹

¹⁵ We have inferred the questioner’s intent through an analysis of the Imām’s response and by comparing this tradition to 1.1.32, which narrates the same incident through a different chain of transmission. Al-Kulaynī most likely included both narrations because both have a strong chain of transmission and because each one reveals details left out by the other.

¹⁶ The Imām’s response makes it clear that the people about whom the questioner is asking are not normal people endowed with sufficient intellect to discern good and bad. Rather they are members of a group whom the Qur’ān calls *mustaḍ‘afūn*, people who have been “made weak” by circumstances beyond their control. In particular, their intellectual capacity has not developed fully because of the environment in which they grew up or a lack of education and training or because of congenital defects like mental retardation. Because God is just, and he knows that these people do not have the ability to make sound judgment, he will not punish them more than the extent that their intellectual capacity warrants.

¹⁷ When we read this admonition in the context of the verse in which it occurs (Qur’ān 59:2), it seems God is simply reminding the Muslims of Medina to take heed of, and show gratitude for, the victory they were given against the Jewish tribe Banū Naḍīr, who had broken their treaty with the Prophet. However, the Imām’s use of the word “reprove” to describe God’s intent in speaking these words guides us to an additional meaning of the verse: we who have sufficient intellect to discern good and bad, ought to view the punishment meted out to Banū Naḍīr as a warning to ourselves that if we ever incur God’s wrath, a similar punishment awaits us.

Tradition 1.1.5 teaches the following: 1) One cannot truly believe in the imamate without sufficient intellectual capacity. 2) Mere love of the Prophet’s family does not qualify one to be called a *shī‘ah*.

¹⁸ We have inferred the qualifier “true” even though it does not exist in the words of the Imām. It is not uncommon for such a qualifier to be omitted in Arabic where contextual clues serve as a replacement. For instance, when al-Khiḍr explains to Moses why he knocked a hole in the hull of the boat in which they were sailing, he says there was a king approaching them who confiscated “every boat” he could find, apparently to strengthen his naval fleet (Qur’ān 18:79). The question arises: is a boat with a hole in it not a boat? Why would the king forgo this boat just because it had a hole in it? The answer is that he did not confiscate *every* boat, rather every *sound* boat. However, the verse does not mention the qualifier “sound” because it is clear that al-Khiḍr’s unconventional service would have been pointless had the king really been after *every*

1.1.7 *A number of our scholars reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālīd reported that al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Yaḡtīn reported that Muḥammad ibn Sinān reported that Abū al-Jārūd reported that Abū Ja‘far [al-Bāqir] said:*

“God will be scrupulous with his servants at the reckoning on the Day of Resurrection only to the extent that he had given them [powers of] intellect in the temporal world.”²⁰

1.1.8 *‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh reported that Ibrāhīm ibn Iṣḥāq al-Aḥmar reported that Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Daylamī reported that his father said, “I told Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Ṣādiq], ‘This person²¹ [is outstanding] in worship, devotion and his station [before God]!’ He asked:*

‘How is his intellect?’

I replied, ‘I do not know.’ Then he said:

‘Reward is proportional to intellect²² [as indicated by the following story.] A man from the Israelites used to worship God on an oceanic island that was lush green, covered with trees, with a panoramic view of the water. One of the angels passed by him [and witnessed his acts of piety and wished to know his reward,] then he said, “My Lord,

boat, even those with holes in them. Similarly, in this tradition, the Imām speaks only of “religion” and does not qualify whether he means Islam or any religion. However, it is clear to anyone who knows the Qur’ān that God has no tolerance for those who are devoted to idolatry or any other religion. For this reason, God clearly states, “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him (Qur’ān 3:85). Thus, it is clear that Imām al-Ṣādiq intended the *true* religion, Islam, not just any religion.

¹⁹ Imām al-Ṣādiq has used a perfect syllogism whose obvious conclusion is “he who employs his intellect shall enter paradise.” Since intellect leads us to what is good and true, it leads us to divine guidance, which is embodied in God’s religion. It then guides us to act on and live by the teachings of that religion, for which God grants the reward of eternal paradise. As mentioned earlier, this is precisely the meaning of 1.1.3.

Tradition 1.1.6 teaches the following: Intellect alone cannot lead us to paradise except by means of the divine guidance embodied in religion.

²⁰ Tradition 1.1.7 teaches the following: 1) Different people have different intellectual capacities. 2) Since prophets have the greatest intellectual capacity of all people, their reckoning will be the most scrupulous. 3) God’s clemency is not necessarily an indication of one’s virtue; rather it could indicate one’s deficient intellectual capacity.

²¹ Most likely this companion mentioned the person’s name when he originally praised him before Imām al-Ṣādiq; however when he recounted the story for his son, he replaced it with the generic equivalent of “so-and-so” because he did not see any use in mentioning the name of someone unknown to his son.

²² This companion was obviously impressed with the man’s piety. However, Imām al-Ṣādiq sought to teach him that piety alone, without consideration for intellectual capacity, is no indicator of a person’s status before God.

show me the reward of this servant of yours.” Almighty God showed it to him, and the angel considered it a pittance [compared to his great acts of piety].²³ So Almighty God communicated to him saying, “Spend some time with him.” The angel came to him in the form of a man. The Jewish man asked, “Who are you?” The angel replied, “I am a pious man. News reached me of this place of yours and of your acts of worship in this place, so I have come to worship God with you.”²⁴ He remained with him that whole day. When morning came, the angel said to him, “This place of yours is most pristine, and ought to be used for nothing but worship. The pious man said, “This place of ours does have a flaw.” The angel asked, “And what is it?” He said, “Our Lord does not have any cattle. If only he had a donkey, we could graze it on this land, for this pasture is being wasted.” The angel asked him, “[You say] your Lord does not have a donkey?” He said, “If he had a donkey, this pasture would not be wasted.” Thereat Allah communicated to the angel saying, “I shall only reward him in proportion to his intellect.”²⁵

²³ The angel’s reaction to the man’s reward and the subsequent lesson he is taught indicate that this angel is fallible in his understanding. However, we should note that his devaluation of God’s reward is not an objection to divine justice, for that would contradict the sinless nature of all angels. Rather he simply wishes to know the reason for God’s decision. This tradition is similar to the story of the angels in the Qur’ān who question why God wishes to create a being “who will cause corruption and spill blood” (2:30).

²⁴ All three statements made by the angel are apparently false, for he is not a man, but an angel; news of the pious man did not *reach* him, rather he passed by and saw him himself; and he did not come to worship with him, but to learn first hand of the wisdom in God’s judgment. He was, however, justified in telling these “lies” because he was on orders from God to visit this man as part of his own education, and his education was obviously more important than telling the truth. In this way, his statements are similar to Abraham’s when he said, “I am ill,” (Qur’ān 37:89) when his mission to destroy the idols more than justified making up an excuse not to go to the carnival with the rest of his townsmen.

²⁵ Three points in this story illustrate this pious man’s weak intellectual capacity: 1) He believes God to have a physical body and that he needs a donkey for transportation. 2) He believes God has created the island’s pasture in vain 3) He thinks the only use for green grass is to graze one’s animals. If he had greater powers of intellect, he would realize that God is incorporeal and needs nothing, least of all a donkey; he would realize that God creates nothing without purpose; he would stretch his imagination to see that green grass has so many more purposes than fodder for cattle.

Tradition 1.1.8 teaches the following: 1) Intellect and not the appearance of an act is the standard for reward. 2) God does not disregard even the acts of people like the Jewish man from this story; rather he rewards them in proportion to their intellectual capacity. 3) Angels

1.1.9 *Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim reported that his father reported that al-Nawfalī reported that Al-Sakūnī reported that Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Ṣādiq] said that the Messenger of God said:*

“If news reaches you of a man’s favorable disposition [in deeds and worship], then examine the extent to which he uses his intellect, for he shall only be rewarded according to his intellect.”²⁶

1.1.10 *Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad reported that Ibn Maḥbūb reported that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sinān said, “I mentioned a man to Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Ṣādiq] who suffered from [incessant doubts about his] ablutions and prayers, and [as I described the man’s circumstances,] I said, ‘He is a rational man.’ Abū ‘Abd Allāh retorted:*

‘What kind of reason does he have when he obeys Satan?’²⁷

I asked him, ‘How does he obey Satan?’ He replied:

‘Just ask him where these [doubts] that enter his mind come from, and he will tell you, “[They are] the work of Satan.”’²⁸

1.1.11 *A number of our scholars reported that Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālīd reported that one of his teachers recounted [without mentioning his source] that the Messenger of God said:*

“God has not apportioned anything for his servants better than [the faculty of] intellect. Thus, for one with intellect to sleep is better than a fool’s vigil, and for one with intellect to remain homebound and sedentary is better than the journeying of a fool [in God’s service].²⁹ God did not send a single prophet or messenger³⁰ until

can appear in human form and talk with people. 4) We must not think the wisdom behind God’s creation is limited to what our deficient minds can comprehend. 5) Pristine places are best used for worship. 6) The angel’s comment that such a pristine place “ought to be used for nothing but worship” shows that those with intellect strive to use God’s best blessings for the best purposes.

²⁶ Tradition 1.1.9 teaches the following: 1) The standard for God’s judgment is intellect. 2) One’s apparent disposition is no indication of the strength of one’s intellect. 3) One’s apparent disposition is no indication of one’s reward 4) We should evaluate others based on reality, not superficial traits.

²⁷ This companion certainly understands that these doubts are a sickness and has come to the Imām to ask how to treat his acquaintance who is suffering from them. As he describes the man, he mentions that he is a rational person. It is then that the Imām interjects and says such a man is not rational in the least, for if he would use his intellect he would realize that he is in Satan’s clutches and would deliver himself by refusing to obey his satanic insinuations.

²⁸ Tradition 1.1.10 teaches the following: 1) Intellect and such incessant doubts cannot coexist. 2) To give in to such doubts is to obey Satan and is, therefore, prohibited 3) Intellect and obedience to Satan cannot coexist.

²⁹ A characteristic of a person with intellect is that he considers all available options and chooses the one that is most important and most beneficial. If he chooses to sleep rather than observe the night vigil in worship, it is because he has weighed his options and concluded that

[that prophet or messenger] perfected his own intellect³¹ and his intellect became better than the combined intellectual capacities of his people. What a prophet [merely] intends to do is better than the tireless efforts of all others.³² A servant [of God] cannot fulfill his obligations to God unless he comprehends him [to the greatest extent possible].³³ The devotions of all worshippers combined [if they lack intellect] cannot reach the station attained by a [single] person with intellect [through his devotions]. People with intellect are those [about] whom God has said, ‘Nobody heeds reminders except the possessors of intellect.’³⁴

under his current circumstances, the former holds more benefit for him than the latter. A fool on the other hand, insofar as he does not use his intellect, chooses his course based on whims and fancies without any consideration of priorities. If he chooses to forgo sleep and spend the night in worship, it is not because he has weighed his options, but simply because it is his habit. Whether or not his sleepless night and his consequent fatigue will prevent him from fulfilling his worldly and Godly obligations the next day is irrelevant to him. Thus, the meaning of this portion of the tradition is that intellect is the best faculty God has given man because it is the tool by which he chooses the best course of action, even though his choice may seem to be the lesser of two options, as is the case with sleep and remaining homebound. Likewise the fool, who fails to make use of God’s gift of intellect, chooses according to habit and fancy what may, in and of itself, seem to be the better of two choices like prayer and journeying in God’s service. Accordingly, there is nothing special about the four actions mentioned in the tradition; rather, they are simply examples that illustrate the greatness of this blessing. If anything, sleep and vigil represent one’s choices with regard to acts of worship, and remaining homebound and journeying represent one’s choices with regard to other human activities such as going out to earn a living.

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of the differences between a prophet and messenger, see 4.3.1-4.

³¹ It is true that the faculty of intellect is a gift from God. However, a person, by using what intellect he has been given, can take an active role in perfecting it. It is for this intellect that the act of perfecting is attributed to the prophet himself.

³² This segment of the tradition is analogous to the tradition’s first segment where a intellectual person’s sleep was compared to a fool’s vigil. Because a prophet has perfect powers of intellect, he carefully considers all his options and evaluates the outcome of each. Appropriately, whatever he decides—or intends—to do is the best possible action under the circumstances. This tradition tells us that such a solid and deliberate intention—despite the fact that making an intention is an effortless act of the mind—far outweighs all the tireless exertion of all people combined if their actions are not based on such exercise of intellect.

³³ We cannot fulfill our duties to God unless we know those duties. And we cannot know those duties unless we know the one who has assigned them to us. And we cannot possibly know the one who assigned them to us without the faculty of intellect.

³⁴ Qur’ān 2:269

At first glance, it seems that the sentences of this tradition are unrelated except that they all extol intellect. However, there are three main ideas that serve to unify its various parts. The tradition's crux is that intellect is the greatest of God's gifts to man. It goes on to explain two reasons for this greatness. First, God's greatest act with respect to man, which is the guidance he offers them through his prophets, depends on the perfection of the faculty of intellect in his prophets. Second, man's greatest act, which is the fulfillment of his duty to God, cannot happen if he does not possess the faculty of intellect.

Tradition 1.1.11 teaches the following: 1) Every choice a person with intellect makes is better than every choice a foolish person makes. 2) One must know God to fulfill his duties to him. 3) Intellect is what gives value to worship. 4) Only a person with intellect heeds a reminder 5) Prophets have the strongest intellects of all people, and it is because of this strength that they are chosen as prophets and sent to guide people. 6) Every prophet is better than all members of his community; thus Prophet Muḥammad is better than all Muslims including the Imāms.